

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

**DRAFT**

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Kocher-Samson Building

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing:

The Architecture of Albert Frey

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 766 North Palm Canyon Drive

City or town: Palm Springs State: CA County: Riverside

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_ statewide      \_\_\_ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

\_\_\_ A      \_\_\_ B      \_\_\_ C      \_\_\_ D

<p>_____</p> <p><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p>_____</p> <p><b>Date</b></p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____</p> <p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Title :</b></p>	<p>_____</p> <p><b>Date</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: METAL:steel, STUCCO, GLASS

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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#### Summary Paragraph

The Kocher-Samson Building was erected in 1934 along North Palm Canyon Drive, the city's primary thoroughfare. This mixed-use International Style building was designed to accommodate offices on the ground floor and a small apartment unit on the second floor. Based upon a series of volumes and voids, the building has a flat roof, plate glass windows, stucco finish, steel framed windows, and minimal overhangs. The ground floor is of post-and-beam construction with concrete block infill; the second story consists of lightweight pressed steel frames welded together on site. The building is in good condition and, while altered, exhibits sufficient integrity to convey its significance when viewed from the public right-of-way.

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#### Narrative Description

When sent to Palm Springs to design the Kocher-Samson Building, Albert Frey brought with him the recent experience of the Aluminaire and other projects influenced by the modern movement. Thus it was no surprise that the building Frey presented to Dr. Kocher was distinctly modernist in its design. Its International Style qualities included a pronounced rectilinear arrangement of volumes, flat roofs, large expanses of glass, and smooth exterior sheathing

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painted white (**Figure 2**). The second story apartment extended west over the primary entrance to provide a modicum of shade in the afternoon.

Situated on a narrow elongated lot, Frey created a checkerboard layout with four small offices that originally looked out on enclosed gardens. A covered passageway linked the volumes down the center. On the second story, the rectangular volume that serves as an apartment had an adjacent terrace enclosed by a pipe railing (**Figure 3**).

The Kocher-Samson Building was conceived in New York and executed in Palm Springs. It did not take into account the need for overhangs on the east and south elevations that would prove necessary to protect the building from the intense desert sun. It was also finished in stucco, a material that Frey came to believe was prone to cracking and an ineffective means of deflecting heat. This was Frey's first project in the Coachella Valley. Over time his designs evolved in response to the unique demands of the desert environment.

Over the years, there have been modifications to the design, materials, and workmanship of the subject property. A thick layer of rough-textured stucco was applied to exterior surfaces, including the street-facing portion of the second story railing. On the ground floor, all three of the small gardens were enclosed and converted into rooms. In addition, the spiral staircase was enclosed on its north and east sides. Stucco now covers the steel pipe post supporting the projecting second story apartment over the entry area. The steel-framed glazed entrance has been replaced with new metal-framed glazing and a single entry door versus the original double door. Although covered with plywood, the original planter fronting the storefront window remains beneath. Unchanged is the original plate glass storefront window with steel-framed clerestories on the primary elevation north of the entrance, including the dramatic chromed cross-bracing that centers the window. The prominent, exposed corrugated metal ceilings of both stories are original. Also original is the metal spiral staircase that leads to the second story apartment with its original steel-framed fenestration that opens to the terrace. The north and east pipe railings of the terrace remain extant, and the apartment interior is also relatively unmodified.

The subject property remains at its original location along North Palm Canyon Drive although the setting has changed substantially from when it was alone along the street in 1934, surrounded on three sides by sand. It is now situated between two adjacent buildings that were constructed in later years. Specifically, the street-facing canopy of the building to its south is physically connected to the subject property at the west end of the latter's south elevation. As relates to association and feeling, the property continues to be used for commercial purposes on the ground floor and as an apartment on the second story.

Despite the noted modifications to the original design, materials, workmanship, and setting, from the public right-of-way the Kocher-Samson Building is able to convey its architectural significance. It clearly is International Style in its design with its rectilinear arrangement and boxy massing, flat roof, generous use of glazing, and rejection of applied ornamentation and historical references. In addition, the Kocher-Samson Building retains its historic association and feeling as a mixed-use commercial and residential building at its original location.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1934  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1934  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Frey, Albert  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Kocher-Samson Building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the local level of significance in the area of Architecture. The property meets the registration requirements of *The Architecture of Albert Frey* Multiple Property Submission in association with the historic context “Desert Modern Design in the Coachella Valley, 1934-1965.” The period of significance corresponds with the building’s date of construction, 1934. Over the ensuing decades Frey’s designs evolved from the rigidity of the European modernist movement as exemplified by this building to a desert modernism unique to the local environment. As a result, the property is important and unique among Frey’s commercial buildings in that it was his first completed project in Palm Springs, is based on the International Style designs that Frey brought from Europe and New York, and does not exhibit the typical architectural features that later came to define Frey’s work after World War II.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

In 1934, Albert Frey completed the Kocher-Samson Building, a mixed-use real estate/insurance office with a second story apartment on Palm Springs’ main thoroughfare. The client, Dr. J.J. Kocher, suffered from pulmonary disease, and had relocated to the dry desert climate years earlier for his health. No longer practicing medicine, Dr. Kocher ran the real estate office. Samson was the man who operated the insurance business. City directories indicate that by 1944, Dr. Kocher had died. 766 N. Palm Canyon Dr. was identified as Herbert Samson Insurance Service. The building housed an insurance business until approximately 1958 when it was listed as the Desert Medical Clinic, which it remained at least through the early 1960s.

Early modernist tenets stressed universality of design freed from historical references. Under this philosophy, a building designed according to the principles of the modern movement would succeed wherever it was placed, whether residential, commercial, institutional, religious, or any other building type. The 1920s and early 1930s designs of Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe illustrated this philosophy, called the International Style because the architectural designs arising from the movement would be suitable anywhere in the world. Although Frey did not identify his work as International Style, the Kocher-Samson Building nonetheless expressed its key design elements: absence of applied ornamentation or any historical reference, rectilinear volumes, flat roof, large windows, pipe support posts and railings, and a smooth exterior finish painted white.

The Kocher-Samson Building is unique among Albert Frey’s oeuvre in the Coachella Valley as his first commission there and the only pure International Style commercial building that Frey designed in the desert. The importance of the building and its significance within the “Desert modern design in the Coachella Valley 1934-1965” historic context are presented in the Multiple Property Documentation Form. The building is a key example of the commercial building property type that maintains sufficient integrity to convey its significance as a readily identifiable



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work of master architect Albert Frey. The property meets National Register Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of Albert Frey's earliest commercial architecture and is the work of a master architect.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

As indicated in *The Architecture of Albert Frey* Multiple Property Documentation Form.

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### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- Other

Name of repository: Palm Springs Art Museum

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one acre

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 33.833598

Longitude: -116.546473

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**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property is located at 766 North Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs, Riverside County, California on the east side of North Palm Canyon Drive. The property fronts approximately 60 feet of North Palm Canyon Drive. Its legal description is POR LOTS 3 & 4 BLK B MB 016/045 PALM SPR APN: 505-286-002

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with 766 North Palm Canyon Drive.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Peter Moruzzi/Architectural Historian  
organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number: 2018 Griffith Park Blvd. #114  
city or town: Los Angeles state: CA zip code: 90039  
e-mail petermoruzzi@gmail.com  
telephone: 213-706-0151  
date: February 9, 2015

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

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### Photo Log

Name of Property      Kocher-Samson Building  
City or Vicinity        Palm Springs  
County                    Riverside  
State                      California  
Photographer           Peter Moruzzi  
Date Photographed     November 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 8      CA\_Riverside County\_Frey MPS\_Kocher-Samson Building\_0001.tif  
Context view, camera facing southeast
- 2 of 8      CA\_Riverside County\_Frey MPS\_Kocher-Samson Building\_0002.tif  
West elevation, camera facing southeast
- 3 of 8      CA\_Riverside County\_Frey MPS\_Kocher-Samson Building\_0003.tif  
West and south elevations, camera facing northeast
- 4 of 8      CA\_Riverside County\_Frey MPS\_Kocher-Samson Building\_0004.tif  
South and east elevations, camera facing northwest
- 5 of 8      CA\_Riverside County\_Frey MPS\_Kocher-Samson Building\_0005.tif  
Ground floor interior view, camera facing south
- 6 of 8      CA\_Riverside County\_Frey MPS\_Kocher-Samson Building\_0006.tif  
Vestibule for second story stairs view, camera facing east
- 7 of 8      CA\_Riverside County\_Frey MPS\_Kocher-Samson Building\_0007.tif  
Second story apartment interior view, camera facing west
- 8 of 8      CA\_Riverside County\_Frey MPS\_Kocher-Samson Building\_0008.tif  
Second story apartment exterior deck view, camera facing southeast

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- Figure 1    Palm Springs sketch map by Frey. Kocher-Samson Building indicated with arrow.
- Figure 2    West and south elevations, looking northeast, circa 1935.
- Figure 3    North and west elevations, looking southeast, circa 1935.

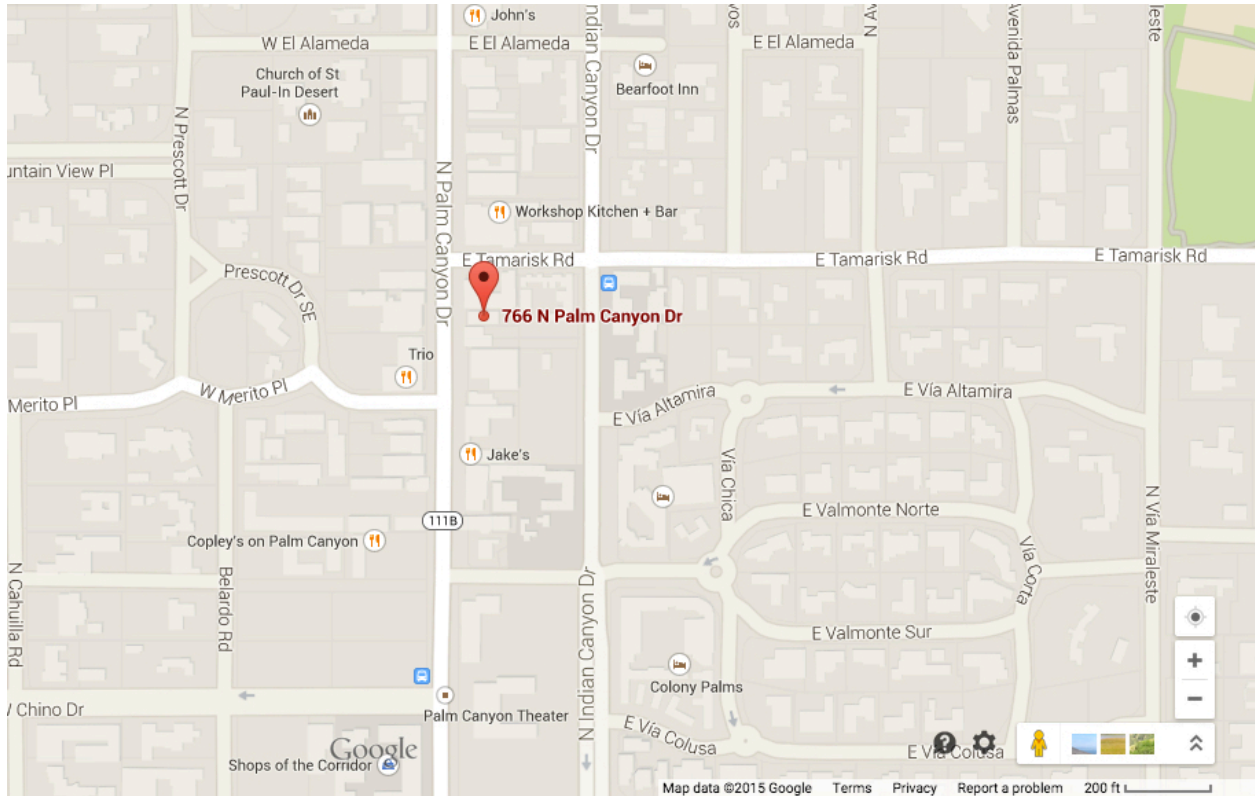
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### Location Map

Latitude: 33.833598

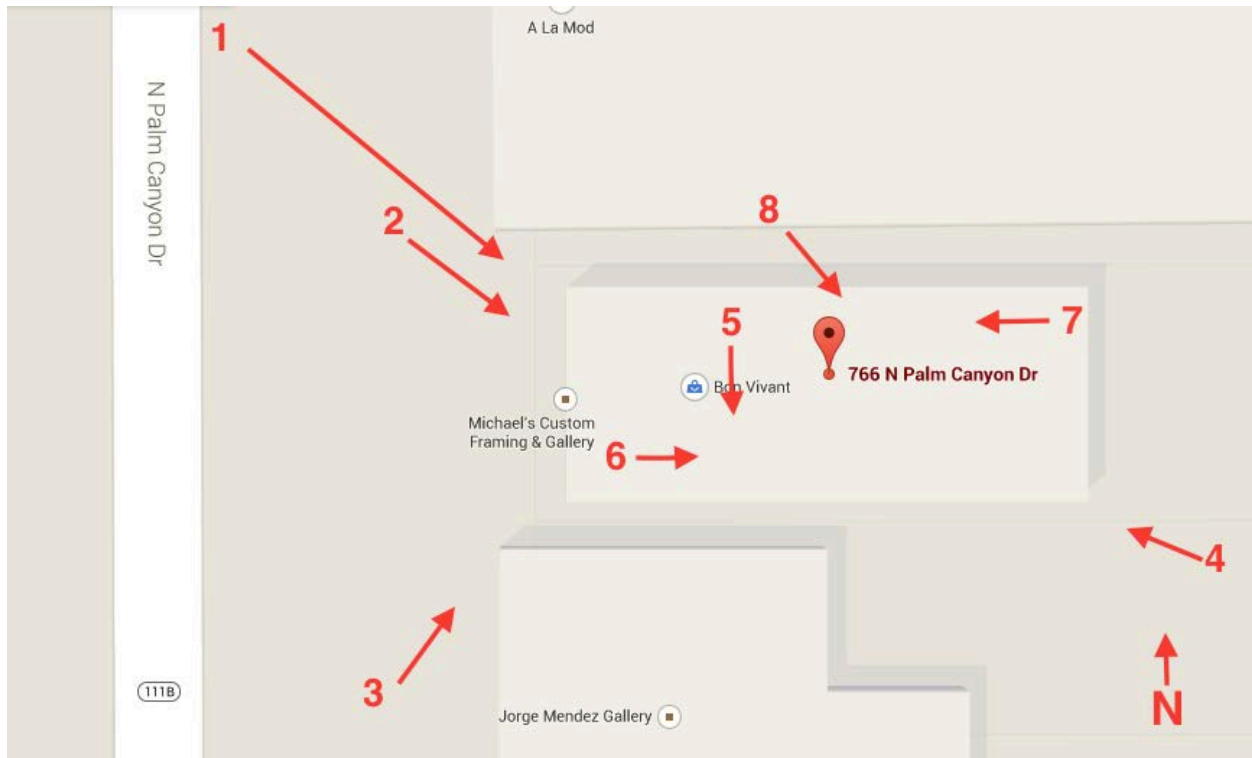
Longitude: -116.546473



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### Sketch Map/Photo Key



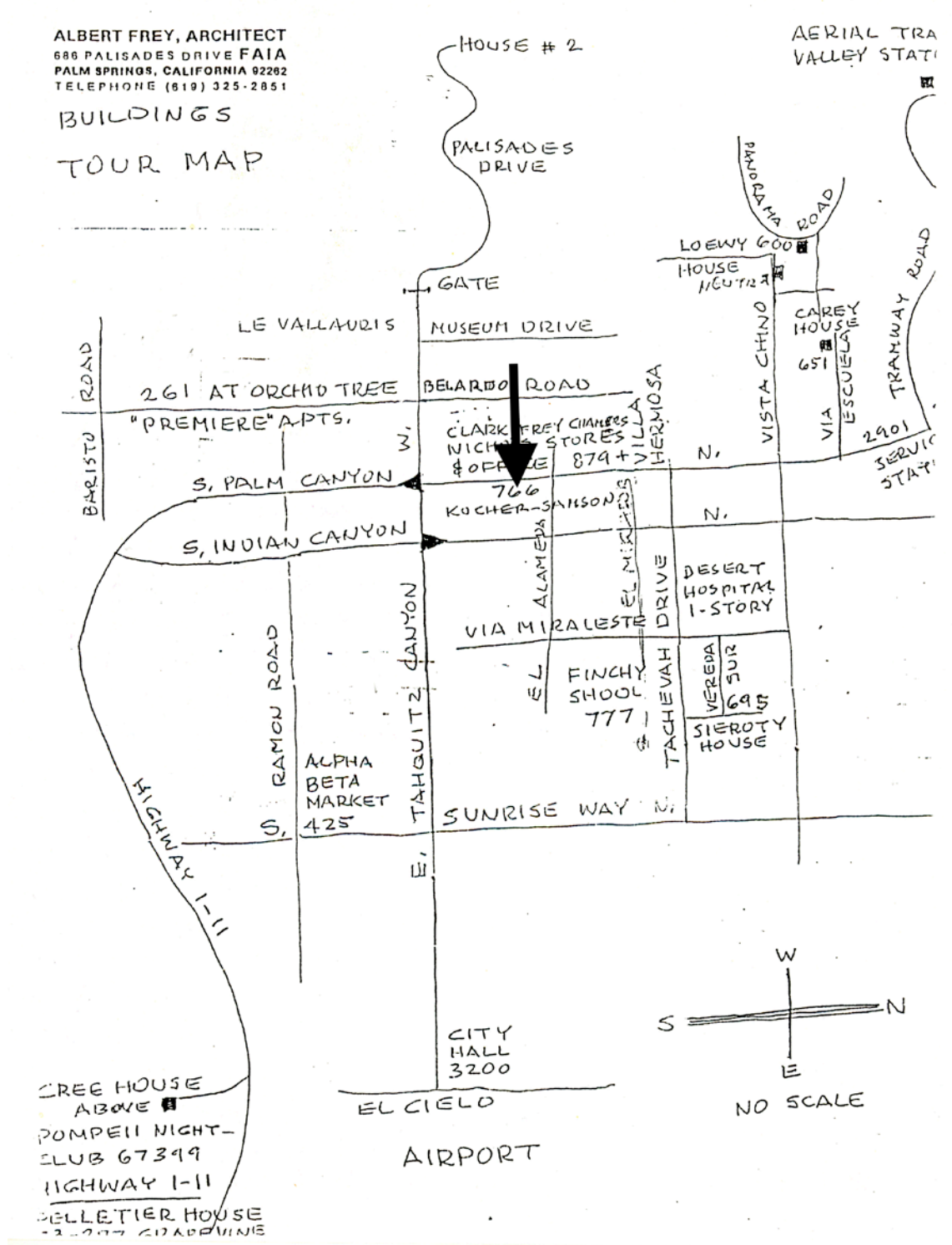
**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Figure 1. Palm Springs sketch map by Frey. Kocher-Samson Building indicated with arrow.



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**Figure 2.** West and south elevations, looking northeast, circa 1935. Photo by Stephan Willard.  
Courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society.





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**Figure 3.** North and west elevations, looking southeast, circa 1935. Photo by Stephan Willard.  
Courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society.

